

**Minutes of a Special Meeting of Acton Community Council held on Wednesday 24 September 2013
at Acton Community Resource Centre, Overton Way, Acton, Wrexham**

Present:

Councillor	E Boylin (Chair)	Councillor	A Whitfield (Vice Chair) *
"	W Baldwin	"	G Lowe
"	R A Davies	"	Mrs A O'Neill
"	Miss J Dudley	"	Mrs C O'Toole
"	Mrs A Evans *	"	T Pierce
"	R Evans	"	J Richards
"	R Hardy	"	Mrs O Simm *
"	J A Kelly		Mrs B Smith

* Absent

Also Present:

Mr Reg Herbert, Freelance Reporter

Mrs Carole Roberts, Clerk to the Council

67 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A Evans, Mrs O Simm and A Whitfield.

68 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at this stage of the proceedings.

69 COMMUNITY FACILITIES: WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET REDUCTIONS AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Further to Minute 49 September 2013, the Chair welcomed Mr Lawrence Isted, Head of Community Wellbeing and Development, Wrexham County Borough Council who was attending the meeting to discuss the severe budget pressures Wrexham CBC has due to a funding shortfall of at least £34m over the next five years. The actual amount will not be known until 16 October when the Welsh Government announces the Provisional Local Government Settlement for 2014/15. The Authority has put in place a Change Programme to enable it to meet the financial challenges, through reshaping services while prioritising the most vulnerable.

The Authority's overall approach to reshaping services involves a fundamental "root and branch" review of all areas of the Council's work so that resources can be used as effectively as possible. This includes reprioritising and reducing services, ceasing services, considering alternative delivery models, working more effectively and efficiently with existing and new partners and eliminating waste. Mr Isted in his letter dated 30 August had circulated three options from 2014/15 and beyond for the ongoing provision of Community facilities in the Acton Community. Members noted that the Community Council had been requested to submit its response to the Consultation by 18 October, 2013. During the debate the Community Council raised the following matters:

- Mr Isted's letter had been perceived by Members as being a virtual ultimatum in respect of the cessation of services if it did not undertake to provide the funding for Community Facilities by raising its Precept requirements;
- Why had the Consultation in respect of the options for the funding and management of Community Facilities in Acton taken place so late in the year?

- Would the whole Authority £34m savings be achievable in the first financial year? Mr Isted indicated that the sooner savings could be achieved then the greater year on year savings could be reached; The total estimated annual saving of the proposals for Community Facilities was £360,000;
- The Community Council was being asked to make a decision without the benefit of the full financial information in respect of the cost implications for 2014/15 and subsequent years; Mr Isted indicated an estimated cost of £34,000 for the Community Council to continue to provide the existing Community Facilities for Acton that Wrexham CBC was providing currently. No further costings could be provided and Community Councils were being asked to make a decision in principle on the three options;
- An additional £34,000 Community Council precept requirement would add £5.86 Council Tax per annum to a Band D property in Acton based on a Council Tax base of 5795. The Community Council was not currently capped by the Welsh Government whilst Wrexham CBC was subject to a capping limit.
- The Community Council did not have sufficient reserves to meet any unplanned expenditure for emergency repairs to Community Facilities or to provide for a phased refresh of playground equipment. The £34,000 cost may be greater as there could also be staff salaries and on costs and increased duties placed on the present Clerk to the Council;
- Members were concerned that there could be further demands and calls placed on the Community Council in subsequent years to take over the funding of other existing Wrexham CBC discretionary Services.
- In respect of Option B, the suggestion for a local Management Committee of volunteers to run a Community Centre was impractical. Mr Isted should contact Community Centre and other key user groups directly to ascertain if they would be willing to take on a Management Committee role. It was not appropriate for the Community Council to do so.
- Relocation of the Playgroups from the Borrass Park and Little Acton Community Centres to the Acton Community Resource Centre would be impractical particularly due to the distance parents would have to walk with pushchairs and limited storage space for equipment at the Centre. The Little Acton Community Centre may be capable of being managed by its playgroup. It may also be possible for the Borrass Park Community Centre to be transferred to the Education Authority, particularly having regard to the use the school makes of the facilities during the day, and that the children attending the playgroup there usually feed into Borrass Park Infants School.
- The Community Council presently funds all but £400 of the cost of maintaining the Acton Park Bowling Green. The Cunliffe Bowling Club members may wish to take this Community facility over.
- If the Community Council were to take over the funding for Community Facilities in Acton it would give a false and unrealistic impression to the Welsh Government of the impact budget reductions were having on the Community.
- The School Crossing Patrol function was a power specifically delegated to Wrexham County Borough Council; the Community Council may wish to make a contribution of £10,500 to ensure the service is retained;
- Acton Community Council was already funding a Detached Youth Service through a Service Level Agreement with Wrexham CBC costing £21,500 per annum that provides a higher level of service than other parts of Wrexham. This Service Level Agreement does good preventative work and protects young vulnerable persons in Acton;
- The Community Council would need to sit down and rationalise and review its existing precept requirements before making a decision in respect of the future funding of Community Facilities;
- Mr Isted was seeking the Community Council's views on what are the most important and priority service provision in the Acton Community.

It was noted that this matter would be discussed again at the Town and Community Council Forum on 3 October 2013 and there would be a drop in session from 4-6pm in Committee Room 3 at the Guildhall Wrexham on 10 October 2013 with Environment Department Officers.

RESOLVED – that

- 1. As suggested at the meeting, Mr Isted write directly to the Little Acton Playgroup and Cunliffe Bowling Club to ascertain if they would be willing to take over the voluntary management respectively of the Little Acton Community Centre and Acton Park Bowling Green;**
- 2. Mr Isted provide information on the usage by Borrass Park Junior School of the Borrass Park Community Centre and the Play areas cost for Acton; and**
- 3. Prior to determining and submitting a formal response by the Consultation deadline of 18 October, 2013, a further Special meeting of the Community Council be held on Thursday 10 October 2013 at 6:30pm following the drop-in session at the Guildhall to enable the Community Council to review and rationalise all its current budget funding commitments and expenditure together with the 2014/15 precept implications of funding the Community Facilities set out in Mr Istead's letter of 30 August 2013.**

Signed as a correct record this 15th day of October 2013

.Chair